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Musical Listening:
Addressing the Rhetoric of Music in Sonic and Multimodal Composition

Michael David Measel, Clemson University

Abstract
Students of Rhetoric and Composition are in need of heuristics that allow them to explore the rhetorical affordances of sound alone and sound integrated into multimodal compositions. The rhythms that pervade speech and prose exhibit a rhetoric of music that contributes to the entirety of a message. Musical Listening is a heuristic that gives students the opportunity to analyze and experiment with the rhetoric of music in speech and prose, as well as instrumental music. It applies the theory of musical expectation to prose, speech, and instrumental music for the purposes of building students' understanding of the affordances of sonic rhetoric and preparing them to integrate sonic rhetoric into their multimodal compositions. Musical Listening teaches students to recognize themselves as multimodal rhetors whose reactions to sonic rhetorics are constantly informed by their history of listening experiences. This article explains the theory of musical expectation in detail, how it applies to speech and prose, and how its practice in the Rhetoric and Composition classroom creates an opportunity to improve students' composition with sonic and multimodal rhetorics. It identifies Musical Listening's contributions to sonic rhetorics, multimodal rhetorics, and rhetorical listening. Several course projects assigned in conjunction with Musical Listening are described that outline students' work with the rhetoric of music both in sonic and multimodal compositions.

Keywords: Sonic Rhetorics, Multimodal Rhetorics, Rhetoric of Music, Rhetoric of Listening.

"Stop, collaborate and listen."
—Vanilla Ice, "Ice Ice Baby"

Introduction
Students are born listeners, more skilled and influenced by this faculty than we are able to know. As teachers of rhetoric we already inherently talk to our students about listening. Rhetorical analysis is built on listening. We listen to texts to determine what audiences the authors of those texts are listening to, or to what audiences they could be listening. Students' listening skills, as well as our own, are culturally informed and powerful rhetorical tools. There is a connection between affect, action, and *aesthetic* that is waiting to be discovered by students through Musical Listening.[1] Musical Listening is a heuristic informed by the theory of

[1] My use of the term *musical listening* is not meant to be confused with Tom Rice's (2015) employment of it in "Listening" (p. 102). While the pedagogy of Musical Listening pertains to

musical expectation that shapes teaching and learning in the rhetoric and composition classroom. The basic tenets of Musical Listening are that 1) we are constantly composing with the rhetoric of music, 2) the rhetoric of music shapes the messages we absorb, and 3) our understanding of the music that pervades us and our rhetoric shapes how we compose and *how we listen*.

We are composers, performers, and audiences of music. We swim in a sea of rhythms that affect us bodily and emotionally, even intellectually. We absorb music through sight as well as sound. For example, when we read, synesthetic rhythms violate or deny our expectations and thus contribute to complex physical and emotional responses that reflect a matrix of relations including cultural style, our attitudes and history of reading experiences, and the dynamics of the piece being read. These rhythms are musical in nature and express the rhetoric of music. By remaining aware as much as possible of their interactions with rhythms, students can shape how they listen and how they perform the rhetorically charged music that pervades their bodies, their media, and their environments.

Musical Listening is a heuristic through which students apply musical expectation theory to rhetorical studies. It is significant to both multimodal rhetorics and sonic rhetorics. It offers students a methodology through which to better understand not only the rhetoric of instrumental music but the rhetoric of music as it manifests in prose and speech. Activities assigned in conjunction with Musical Listening encourage students to experiment and practice with both aural rhetoric alone and integration of sound into multimodal rhetoric. Practices that lead to an intimate understanding of the rhetorical affordances of sound increase students' ability to compose and deliver effectively with sonic rhetoric alone and to understand how sonic rhetoric functions when integrated into a multimodal composition. Musical Listening is also significant to rhetorical listening because it adds a sensuous dimension and offers new ways to consider, discuss, and enact what Cheryl Glenn (2004) and Krista Ratcliffe (2005) call "cross-cultural conduct" (pp. 152, 17).

The following literature review reflects a call for heuristics and pedagogies that highlight sonic rhetorics, the rhetoric of music, and multimodal composition. Following the literature review, I will establish the prevalence of rhythms in prose and speech. Next, I will explicate musical expectation theory, then I will demonstrate how its claims about music's effects on the body are bolstered by arguments within rhetorical studies. Lastly, I will explain Musical Listening in detail and describe several course projects assigned in conjunction with Musical Listening.

Literature Review

Multimodal composition has gained quite a bit of momentum on its journey to the foreground of Composition Pedagogy, but it still needs proponents. The push to integrate multimodal

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listening to music, it treats the category of music as a vast category encompassing elements of speech and even our own *selectivity* (Burke, 2018, p.176) in absorption and production of media.

composition into Composition and Rhetoric curriculum is nothing new. Cynthia Selfe is just one among a plethora of voices including Kathleen Blake Yancey (2004) and Jody Shipka (2016) who champion multimodal composition as a means of engaging with the media-saturated environment, digital and analog, and as a way to expand on students' ability to experiment with multiple media in the invention phase of their composition. Selfe (2009) calls for the promotion of multiple literacies in the composition classroom beyond merely print text. She writes in "The Movement of Air, the Breath of Meaning: Aurality and Multimodal Composing,"

> Composition classrooms can provide a context not only for *talking about* different literacies, but also for *practicing* different literacies, learning to create texts that combine a range of modalities as communicative resources: exploring their affordances, the special capabilities they offer to authors; identifying what audiences expect of texts that deploy different modalities and how they respond to such texts. (p. 643)

Aurality and our relationship with the rhetoric of music constitute a particular literacy. Musical Listening not only encourages students to talk about and practice aural rhetoric in multiple modes, but it encourages them to explore the affordances of a rhetoric that they already use. Furthermore, Musical Listening helps students to build aural literacy by practicing with multimodal compositions that require the inclusion of music.

The call for heuristics that promote effective multimodal composition and students' understanding of and practice with multimodal rhetoric are echoing in Composition Pedagogy. Paul Dan Martin (2018) calls for instructors to offer students new design strategies for multimodal composition. Martin argues that heuristics that guide the design of multimodal compositions and teaching strategies that "provide writing instructors an opportunity to teach students multimodal writing strategies grounded in rhetorical theories and design principles" will improve students' understanding and composition of multimodal rhetoric (p. 150). Musical Listening, both as a heuristic and a teaching strategy, contributes to students' understanding of the rhetoric of music in aurality alone and in multimodality. Students practice with sonic rhetoric independently and focus without interference on the affordances of sound, considering all of their past listening experiences while they are listening to themselves both in performance and playback.

In *Sounding Composition: Multimodal Pedagogies for Embodied Listening*, Steph Ceraso (2018) promotes classroom engagement with sonic persuasion through multimodal listening pedagogy. Specifically, she stresses the import of multimodal activities in the classroom that engage the body as a sonic object. she reflects in *Sounding Composition* on examples of multimodal listening pedagogy in her courses. Ceraso offers the example of a project in which one student, David, "focused his experience of using sound as a rhythmic coping mechanism to deal with anxiety" (p. 62). When she suggests methods of "embodied listening," she means this very literally: attuning oneself to rhythms by learning to feel them in the body, not just at the ears. Ceraso's work with sonic rhetorics in the classroom captures the true complexity of the music of rhetoric, and our potential to practice embodied listening in the classroom.

Musical Listening uses the rhetoric of music and thereby the rhetorical affordances of sound as a starting point from which to approach multimodal composition. Sound is an intimate mode of communication by which we dramatically influence each other's attitudes and actions. Ben Harley (2018) writes that sound "is a communicative mode, a semiotic channel, and a way of engaging one another that allows not only for persuasion but also for rearticulation of who we are in relation to ourselves and a whole assembled host of others." He asserts that educators can help students to use sound "ethically and productively" in their rhetorical endeavors. Harley recognizes the true power of sound in its intimacy with us, both physical and emotional: "we should remember that sound's intimacy is its power – its closeness makes it impactful."

Steven B. Katz (1996) applies Leonard Meyer's (1956) "principles of pattern perception" (p. 73), key to Meyer's take on the theory of musical expectation, to composition pedagogy. In Katz's words, "As a unity of sensuous form and intellectual content, perhaps affective response in reading and writing can best be taught by the performance and imitation of the sensuous music of rhetoric" (p. 197). Musical Listening builds on Katz's pedagogy with the addition of David Huron's work in the theory of musical expectation. Thomas Rickert (2008) offers the following powerful call to action at the conclusion of "Language's Duality and the Problem of Music": we should seek new ways of understanding, theorizing, and working with rhetoric as both an affective and musical art. This will mean, among other things, expanding greatly on our ability to theorize, codify, teach, and perform the musical aspects of language to achieve our persuasive aims (p. 162). Musical Listening pushes for recognition of the rhetoric of music and offers students an interdisciplinary heuristic for rethinking all of the texts they absorb and compose, including multimodal rhetoric.

Krista Ratcliffe and Cheryl Glenn have carved out a place for Musical Listening to fit into the category of rhetorical listening. Ratcliffe (2005) defines rhetorical listening in the context of her book *Rhetorical Listening: Identification, Gender, Whiteness* as "generally a trope for interpretive invention" and "a code of cross-cultural conduct" (p. 17). Glenn (2004) rounds out this thought in *Unspoken: A Rhetoric of Silence*, regardless of its previous publication, when she writes that rhetorical listening "opens the silences surrounding codes of cross-cultural conduct" (p. 152). Musical Listening adds to rhetorical listening the dimension of rhythm – not of intellectual content, but of *sound*. In response to Glenn, Musical Listening cocks its ears to codes in the rhetoric of music to spark discussions about codes of cross-cultural conduct. Specifically, it opens a space to address how we listen and reflect, reject, or ignore each other's aural rhythms and when doing so is either beneficial or harmful. For example, this might develop into a conversation about code-switching.

The Rhythms of Prose and Speech

Rhythms, and therefore music, are not present only in instrumental music. They are fundamental elements of prose and speech. Morris Croll, Timothy M. B. O'Callaghan, and Diane Davis confirm the rhythm and thereby the music of all texts, and Cynthia Selfe confirms the rhythm of speech. The music of these rhythms is rhetorically charged and conveys meaning. The term *rhythm* has broad and specific functions. A composition, whether

instrumental music, prose or speech, has rhythm; it also has changing rhythms. Prose and speech rhythms are not often highly repetitive like poetry or instrumental music. At times when we say "rhythm," it means more than patterns stressed and unstressed sounds occurring in highly systematic, highly repetitive patterns. Each quality of voice represented by Cicero (1942) in Book III of *De Oratore*, for example, occurs in its own rhythms, including volume and pitch (Iviii.217-9).

Timothy M. B. O'Callaghan (1984) argues in "Prose Rhythm: An Analysis for Instruction" that "rhythm in prose is not confined to syllables" (p. 103). Alternatively, building on D. W. Harding's investigation of syllabic runs and pauses, O'Callaghan argues that mere alternation does not constitute rhythm. However, O'Callaghan also indicates that it is up to the reader to discover and identify these rhythms, thus in some sense creating them in writing that is itself neutral, and that there is always potentially more rhythm to be discovered, given enough dedication to analysis. Thus, rhythm is consistently present where we look and listen for it. This may be because we are born into rhythm are create it ourselves, so we cannot escape it. Schaeffer (1977) writes, "The heartbeat is nothing more than a rhythm module, roughly dividing humanly perceived rhythms into fast and slow" (p. 227).

The shapes of sounds constitute noise, but rhythms created by the interchanges between sounds (however "arhythmic" they may seem) and expectation of particular rhythms in absentia create the rhetoric of music. Rhythm is common to any mode of rhetorical delivery, but the musical quality of rhythm is most evident in instrumental music and in language. Diane Davis (2011) asserts in "Writing with Sound" that "every text is at the very least part musical score – even in a printed text, the synesthetic event of persuasion depends to a large degree (larger than is usually acknowledged) on tone, style, beat, rhythm – and static." Cynthia Selfe (2009) confirms that "pace, volume, rhythm, emphasis, and tone of voice" express abundant meaning in speech (p. 633). The musical element of the "synesthetic event of persuasion" is often underplayed or entirely overlooked, increasing the need for heuristics like those of Katz, Ceraso, and Martin to address and promote awareness of the rhetoric of music.

Rhythm is fundamental the rhetoric of prose and speech. Morris Croll demonstrates that rhythm is present and highly rhetorical in both texts that are designed to be eloquent and texts that are designed to be stoic. In "Attic Prose in the Seventeenth Century," Morris Croll (1966) demonstrates that rhythms characterize and qualify even the most apparently dry pieces, those reflecting a popular view of Greece's Attic style, or Cicero's low style. This is especially evident in his analysis of the essay style, for example Francis Bacon's prose, which treats language as a direct conduit for information not to be adorned or unnecessarily inflected (p. 82). Thus, as Davis indicates above, and so many scholars in sonic rhetorics echo, the music of language is inescapable. Where there is language, there is rhythm and therefore music. And where there is music, there is rhetoric.

An example of prose form that exhibits rhythm is *Cursus*, Latin for "course" ("Latin Definition," 2020). Merriam-Webster (2020) defines *cursus* as "a pattern of cadence at the end of a sentence or phrase in medieval Latin prose which aimed by varying rhythm to avoid stressing

the ultimate syllable." Croll (1966) borrows the term in his discussion of the rhythms of prose. As Robert O. Evans (1966) notes in his introduction to Croll's essay "The Cadence of English Oratorical Prose," "Croll makes a very important discovery when he demonstrates that cursus effects need not take place only in terminal positions; that is, at the ends of commata" (p. 300). I might add that specifically, pauses in oral delivery need not take place only in terminal positions found in prose.

Leonard Meyer points to Curt Sach's (1953) argument that form is not a type of rhythm, countering that form can be described in rhythmic terms because the roots of rhythm are naturally present in form due to its lack of monotony. Meyer writes that "any discussion of form in rhythmic terms [should not] be taken to exclude other viewpoints" (p. 112). Thus, non-musical explanations of form don't negate its description in rhythmic, or generally musical for that matter, terms. Kenneth Burke (1931) agrees with Meyer regarding the analysis of music and literature: "As in musical theory, one chord is capable of various analyses, so in literature the appeal of one event may be explained by various principles" (p. 129). By "literature" Burke refers to both writing and speech (p. 123).

Rhythms and "Motor Sympathy"

The musical rhythms that lead to motor sympathies are the same aural rhythms that contribute to the rhetorical effect produced when reading prose and listening to speech and instrumental music. Whether someone is listening to prose, speech, or an orchestra, the effect is both emotional and physical. Anna Gibbs and Kenneth Burke address the unconscious sympathetic motor responses to sights and sounds. Gibbs (2010) describes the process by which we exhibit imitative physical responses to the "motor schema" of others:

> When we watch someone performing an action, the mirror system in human beings evokes both the "sensory description" of the stimuli and the motor schema of the action itself [citation omitted].[2] In other words, when we see an action performed, the same neural networks that would be involved if we were to perform it ourselves are activated. In fact, we may actually experience something of what it *feels* like to perform the action, as when we watch someone jump and feel our own body strain toward the movement. Darwin describes this as the motor sympathy between two bodies. (pp. 196-7)

Gibbs' description of the "motor sympathy" that a person experiences via sight also applies to aural stimuli. When we hear speech or listen internally to reading, we hear either the actual rise and fall or our imagined rise and fall of the text's music. We identify with the speaker through our sensation of their linguistic rhythms and find ourselves gratified or agitated respectively with fulfillment or violation of expectation.

Kenneth Burke (1931) confirms the "motor sympathy" that one feels when interacting with the rhythms of aesthetic form. He writes, "The appeal of form as exemplified in rhythm enjoys a special advantage in that rhythm is more closely allied with 'bodily' processes. Systole and

[2] Gibbs is quoting V. Gallese (2007) from "The 'Conscious' Dorsal Stream."

diastole, alternation of the feet in walking, inhalation and exhalation, up and down, in and out, back and forth, such are the types of distinctly motor experiences 'tapped' by rhythm" (p. 140). Burke (1969) writes that when the body originally succumbs to a particular consistent rhythm, it falls in line with that pattern and as long as that rhythm or collection of rhythms continues uninterrupted, it appeals to the listener and leaves them susceptible to accepting associated intellectual content (p. 58).

In light of the observations of Anna Gibbs and Kenneth Burke, it is becoming increasingly evident that humans don't just have multimodal experiences: humans are multimodal *beings*. When we experience the rhythms of language, there is an inevitable synthesis of senses – modes of communication – that occurs both in the communicator and the audience. Gibbs (2010) calls this multisensory synthesis "reassembling." It brings together, among other senses, the intimately connected sights and sounds that constitute an alphabet as well as bodily sensations of rising and falling, speeding up and slowing down. The real beauty of Gibbs's take on the relationship between mimesis and multimodal reassembling is that, much in the spirit of Burke's approach to language, Gibbs highlights the ambiguity between media and sensory categories. These separate or bleed into each according to each rhetorical situation as it arises.

Students become "sensitive to prose rhythms" (Burke, 1931, p. 141) by the act of listening to (silent) reading – an interior hearing of the language which they absorb visually. However, the scope of musicality in prose does not go unchallenged. While Susanne K. Langer (1953) recognizes rhythmic patterns in speech and prose, she argues that the sound of music, however coded, manifests its full potential through oral performance, while the sound of prose can reach its full potential only by means of the "inner ear" (p. 135). She asserts that the inner ear crops language, and prose need not be understood for its higher-level oratorical features. Langer argues that music is "artistic" while language tends toward the "practical"; thus the musical elements of volume, duration, tone, timbre, stress, and consonance and dissonance are not perceived directly by the inner ear during reading as they are during the act of listening to speech (pp. 135-7).

However, readers cannot escape the rhetorical effects of music that are implied to the ear through their synesthetic representation in visual prose. Whether we listen with the limited musical experience afforded us by "inner ear" suggested by Langer (1953, pp. 135-7) or the more encompassing silent reading promoted by Steven B. Katz, we possess a natural faculty for listening to reading, and prose rings with musical rhythms when we absorb it. Knowing thus that we cannot escape the music of rhetoric, we must learn to recognize it, listen to it, and mold it for our rhetorical purposes. We must teach it.

The Theory of Musical Expectation

The theory of musical expectation in the hands of Leonard Meyer and David Huron is a versatile and efficient tool for understanding the similar experience various listeners have when listening to instrumental music, speech, prose. In his discussion of the principles of pattern perception, Leonard Meyer (1956) argues that our patterned expectations of the progression of aural forms

within a given musical composition, including both melody *a*nd rhythm, define how we respond to music both physically and emotionally as it unfolds. According to Meyer, we experience physical arrest and emotional arousal at moments when our expectations of musical development are violated (pp. 24, 31). David Huron (2006) builds upon Meyer's work and applies to it evolutionary theory, arguing that our sense of expectation and fulfillment in relation to musical patterns is influenced by our instinct to maintain survival (p. 357).

Meyer (1956) and Huron (2006) demonstrate that as a listener predicts oncoming events in a musical sequence, the listener exhibits unconscious physical preparation for the expected stimulus. This tension is known by both authors as "expectation." Meyer also refers to expectation as "suspense" (p. 28) and Huron describes it as "a phenomenon akin to stress" (p. 305). The amount of tension a listener will feel is inversely proportional to how confident the listener is of the predictability of an oncoming musical stimulus. When music become highly predictable with little variation, the likelihood of tension drops very low. High predictability is characterized by a great degree of largely faithful repetition with just enough variation to avoid "saturation." Meyer's term for dependable repetition is "good continuation" (p. 92). The ongoing struggle between good continuity and deviation affects the listener both physically through what Huron terms the "tension response" (p. 9) and emotionally through the "prediction response" (p. 12).

When musical shape is predictable in its repetition, expectation for good continuation is fulfilled. Meyer (1956) refers to fulfillment in the music as "completion" and fulfillment in the listener as "closure" (p. 129). This fulfillment leads to what Huron terms a "positively valenced prediction response" in the listener (p. 24). When good continuation is interrupted by deviation the listener alternately experiences a negatively valenced prediction response (p. 23). In this instance the listener is denied closure. The matter can become more complicated when the listener is having a layered sonic experience whereby they are simultaneously experiencing multiple emotions regarding the same stimulus. In this case, the greater weight of either positive or negative limbic responses can determine whether a prediction response is negatively or positively valenced. Degrees of expectation and responses are proportional: the more tension, the greater the emotional response. They also vary according to length and strength of deviation and to levels of closure. When expected completion is delayed, tension builds and leads to an increased positively valenced prediction response.

A listener's attitude toward a musical experience is not determined by tension and prediction responses alone (Huron, 2006). According to Huron (2006), the "appraisal response" contributes conscious awareness of the situation and may differ from the prediction response, resulting in the phenomenon of "contrastive valence" (p. 22). Contrastive valence occurs when a negatively valenced prediction response is followed by a neutral or positively valenced appraisal response, and vice-versa. (p. 15). The faster, unconscious prediction response is followed by the slower, conscious appraisal response (pp. 17, 29, 39). Thus, it is possible for an individual to experience pleasure as a result of surprise, despite the fact that surprise causes the "*fight, flight,* and *freeze* responses" (pp. 31-33, 35).

There are two different kinds of expectation: dynamic and schematic. Dynamic expectation is based on how a piece unfolds in the moment with no concern for a greater context. Schematic expectation is based on a person's entire listening history. It incorporates Huron's (2006) description of the psychological schemas that we develop from individual listening history and interaction with styles and genres. This means that responses to music are culturally informed. The consequence is that there is at times a margin of error. Meyer (1956) places the potential of fault by ignorance on the listener, who may understandably not be educated in music well enough to know which cultural rhythms to expect (pp. ix, 160). Huron supports this theory of potential "accurate" or "inaccurate" expectations based on one's listening history (p. 204). Referring to a musical experiment led by conducted by Robin W. Wilkins and others, Ben Harley (2018) writes, "The listener, their experiences, and the music co-create the neural pathways of the individual's brain, and the researchers speculate that sound could drastically alter how brain networks are organized."

The theory of musical expectation indicates that our responses to music, however similar, are not universally consistent (Huron, 2006, p. 26). Some studies by Honing (2013), Fritz et al. (2009), and others verify similarities in response across various cultures to consistent musical patterns. However, these studies simply do not cover enough variables, namely cultures and musical styles, to establish positively the underlying mechanisms cueing these apparently universal patterns of response (Honing). It appears that while some responses may in fact be universal, the causes could be biological, psychological, and culturally informed. What has emerged undoubtedly is, in the words of Thomas Fritz et al., "the notion that similar emotion-specific acoustic cues are used to communicate emotion in both speech and music" (p. 574), a notion confirmed by Klaus. R. Scherer (1995, p. 245) as well as Justin and Laukka (2003, p. 797), among others. The emotional cues observed by musical expectation theory can be interpreted similarly in speech using the principles of expectation and affect.[3]

Musical Listening

Musical Listening is a heuristic based on the theory of musical expectation that encourages students to listen for and compose with the rhetoric of music in prose, speech, and instrumental music, as well as multimodal rhetoric. Where there are rhythms there is music, and where there is music there is rhetoric. Rhythms are present in speech and prose; thus speech and prose exhibit the rhetoric of music. The theory of musical expectation indicates that fulfillment and violation of expected rhythms, both dynamically and schematically, shapes the physical and emotional quality and intensity of listener responses. Musical Listening teaches students that 1) they are constantly compositing with the rhetoric of music, 2) the rhetoric of music shapes the messages they absorb, and 3) their understanding of the music that pervades them and their rhetoric shapes how they compose and how they listen.

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[3] There are several striking similarities between musical expectation and Burke's (1931) theory of literary form. I address these in my dissertation, "'Questioning Attitude: The Rhetoric of Kenneth Burke's Musical Compositions.'" See *Counter-Statement.*

Martin (2018) seeks heuristics that focus on structure and form to inform design of multimodal composition (p. 135). He desires to see teachers open students' senses to the rhetorical power of literacies beyond the traditional classroom focus on print. Martin writes,

> Students have internalized and normalized the structure and form of print literacy as a stabilizing feature for content and knowledge-making. They do not initially see how structure in multimodal writing instantiates an argument and that the structuring of semiotic materials is the argument. *Structure argues*. Learning how to see the structure as the argument of a multimodal form is vital for developing rhetorically-minded multimodal writers. (pp.143-44)

Martin is both referring to the overall structure of the multimodal composition and structure within each material that goes into that structure. There are "structural conventions for sound and aurality" including volume, pacing, rhythm, tone, and "emphasis," and there is the structure that sees multiple kinds of content (aural, visual, text) brought together in various potential combinations with various degrees of emphasis (p. 144).

Each structural decision changes the form, the form of a single mode and the form of the overall composition (Martin, 2018, pp. 139, 141). In adjusting the structure and thereby the form of sound, the rhetor shifts emphasis in the multimodal composition and affects the efficiency level of the message: "Instead of revising a paragraph of words and sentences, a multimodal rhetor might adjust the volume of a sound clip, and then add an additional sound clip to increase the efficiency of the message design" (p. 144) When students are learning and practicing with aural rhetoric alone, they are simultaneously practicing for multimodal composition that integrates sound. Students' understanding of the rhetorical affordances of the form and structure of sound alone informs how they approach the integration of sound with other modes. Musical Listening fulfills Martin's vision of students connecting the shaping of a single mode with the shaping of a multimodal message. Martin argues, "Students can practice structuring volume, pace, tone, and rhythm to generate emphasis in multimodal forms – to examine how volume, rhythm, and tone shape the emphasis of the message" (p. 145). Musical Listening applies the theory of musical expectation to aural rhetoric, analyzing it for form and structure. Musical Listening activities, some of which are described below, offer students an opportunity and a guide by which to shape the rhetoric of music to operate cooperatively with other rhetorical modes.

Incorporating the study of musical expectation theory, Musical Listening answers Steph Ceraso's call for more embodied listening activities by bringing awareness to the relationship between physical, emotional, and intellectual responses to the rhetoric of music. We address the rhetoric of music by applying the theory of musical expectation theory to the rhythms of prose, speech, and instrumental music as they exist alone and as they are incorporated multimodal compositions. This means physical, emotional, and intellectual responses. As I have argued thus far, the scope of aural rhythms, encompasses far more than mere rhythmic tapping to the beat of a familiar tune. Musical Listening is an embodied listening activity. Students reflect on their physical, emotional, and intellectual responses to the rhetoric of music and to their listening histories. Students learn to literally feel their own rhythmic tendencies and the

tendencies of others around them, to be aware of those tendencies, and to use their knowledge of those tendencies and how listeners react to craft their own musical rhetoric.

Musical Listening challenges students to listen for cultural expressions of style and encourages students to hear and respect the rhythms of surrounding cultures. It fulfills Ratcliffe's definition of rhetorical listening: applying the theory of musical expectation to speech and prose gives students an opportunity for interpretive invention. Furthermore, Musical Listening is arguably a code of cross-cultural conduct: students are encouraged to listen and consider their own listening biases. Understanding one's own composition and listening rhythms is more than an exercise in self-exploration and improvement of rhetorical skills; it is an exercise in understanding how we identify with and reject the rhythms of our fellow rhetors. Both ethics and the goal of truly effective persuasion demand that listeners aware of the tenets of Musical Listening should learn to recognize, respect, learn, and respond respectfully to aural rhetoric that is not native to their own cultures.

Exploring the affordances of sound while respecting the cultural identities of all involved is by no means a simple task, but it creates teachable moments and is a valuable skill. Enacting the necessary respect requires much consideration and preparation. Socioeconomic constrains complicate the classroom situation; students and teachers find themselves needing to bridge gaps of technology and exposure. Martin (2018) writes,

> Rhetors must recognize the cultural and social limitations they face when deciding how to access and compose with multiple modes for multiple audiences. Students working from and within strained socio-economic backgrounds or underprivileged communities will need to consider the unique demographic and constraints that shape their rhetorical moves. Some of our students may not have access to certain mediums or mode, or they may not have access to the multiliteracies required to use them effectively. (pp. 142-43)

Listeners must be open to more than just the rhythms of cultural elements like nationality and religion. Socioeconomic backgrounds greatly determine listeners' and composers' access to literacies. Musical Listening's address of the rhetoric of music in the classroom and in course projects gives students a language for discussing the elements of music regardless of their existing knowledge of traditional music theory. Incorporation of web-based audio composition and editing software like Soundation and Flat allows students to create audio compositions that require little to no musical knowledge or skill but also allow for students to utilize musical knowledge and skill to create complex, intricate compositions. Soundation and Flat, being web-based software that offer free access, only require internet access to operate.

Musical Listening allows students to recognize themselves as musical agents in a sonic world. With the introduction of Musical Listening into rhetoric and composition studies, I am calling for students to participate holistically in sonic rhetorics. Students consistently operate with the rhetoric of music *and* body language, not to consider other modes: they are multimodal beings. Harley (2018) deems students who compose multimodal rhetoric to be "multimodal rhetors" (pp.138,144). The practice of Musical Listening recognizes students as multimodal beings

swimming in aural (and other) media. Students are ultimately encouraged to see (or hear) themselves as musical instruments, to recognize musical rhetoric across media, and to understand how the music that pervades them and their media shapes the way they listen. When students listen to rhythm through Musical Listening, they listen not only for the parsing and repetition of aural symbols, but also to their own responses to aural rhythms.

The principles of expectation theory do not just apply to music or even to the rhetoric of music; they are applicable to all of our experiences. Huron (2006) writes that *Sweet Anticipation* is not for an audience of musicians, it is a "general theory of expectation" for psychologists and cognitive scientists as well (p. vii). In this light, schematic expectation is an especially important element to consider when designing assignments in conjunction with Musical Listening. Schematic expectation is vital to the building of students' composition skills because it shapes how they and interact with genres. For example, deviations in standard technical documents like résumés and proposals violate schematic expectation and thus hurt the audience's reception of the composition. Students must refer to mental schema to recognize and compose genres accurately.

Students can apply Musical Listening to course activities to strengthen their relationship with the rhetoric of music across rhetorical modes. Below are key Musical Listening activities that challenge students to listen and experiment with the rhetoric of music in prose, speech, and even instrumental music, strengthening their understanding of the rhetorical affordances of sound alone and integrated into multimodal composition.

Activity A: Oral Interpretations of Class Readings

Students orally present their interpretations of various readings for class each week. Practice with oral delivery allows them an opportunity to consider the role of rhythm in both what they read and their speech. Often textbook readings flow in a manner reflective of what Croll called "anti-Ciceronian," "Baroque" style. (p. 208, 201). They evidence style that attempts to minimize musical effects. These readings are designed to be neither eloquent nor pathos-laden, but rather for the most part informative. However, practice with reading sections of them aloud, as well as other classroom texts, can increase students' understanding of rhythm. Students listening are encouraged to consider rhythms as well as content, and to comment on the rhythms they observe. When students encounter difficulty in their delivery, I will intervene by having them pause for breath, consider their next statement in the context of their delivery rhythm, perform an oral exercise such as counting or brief repetition, and ultimately cue them to continue speaking. This almost overwhelmingly results in a stronger delivery.

Activity B: Oral Instructions

Before implementing speech and instrumental music into multimodal compositions, students practice with aural rhetoric alone. The following project is assigned directly following the Written Instructions project, which can cover the same topic and task but is geared toward an audience with a different knowledge level. In the spirit of sonic rhetorics, they are studying the rhetorical affordances of sound. Tone, volume, pacing, and rhythm all shape the rhetorical

force of the student's composition. Below is the description from my Oral Instructions assignment prompt.

> Using audio recording software, produce a second set of instructions, with your options for your instructional video project in mind. Compose a set of numbered instructions that meet the needs of an audience who is already highly familiar with your topic (*the topic*, not necessarily the task that you are detailing). Do not provide basic details or definitions for terms that an audience highly familiar with the topic will likely already know. Spend your time explaining more complicated concepts and steps that even a well-informed audience might not know about the particular task that you are detailing. Use audio editing software to clear your recording of background noise, clicks and pops, and clipping. Audio recording should be between two and four minutes and free of background noise. Recommended tools for this project include Adobe Audition and Audacity.
>
> *Musical Listening:*
>
> *Consider your rhythm, pitch, tone, and pacing when delivering your instructions. You may want to study and imitate the rhetorical choices made by authors who have composed oral instructions that you have found particularly useful in your own listening history.*

Students frequently improve on their oral delivery skills with this project. In the revision process, they commonly are asked to address issues of tone, pacing, and volume, all of which affect delivery. Furthermore, students are able to weigh their oral instructions against their written instructions and get a clearer sense of the rhetorical affordances of aural rhetoric alone.

Activity C: Exploring Arguments with Music

My First-Year Composition students have in the past used web-based software including Flat and Soundation to create musical expressions of their major arguments within a series of project-based assignments, and the results were extremely rewarding. Specifically, students chose between two pieces of software. Soundation is more accessible to students who have less or no experience composing music. In Soundation, the user can choose audio loops from a number of different instruments and styles. In this way, they both get to choose particular sound gradients, but they also have the opportunity to express themselves by choosing musical styles with which they identify, and which they also feel is appropriate to represent their arguments. Flat.io features essentially digital sheet music and requires a little more experience and knowledge of music theory. However, I was quickly able to acclimate even students with no history in music theory to this software as well. Below is the description from my Arguing with Music assignment prompt:

> Interpret your major argument using the rhetoric of music. Using audio composition and editing software and/or recording your own instrumentation, layer at least 3 parts in a two-to-three-minute musical piece that represents your argument. Vocals count as an instrument, but don't apply lyrics. Factors to consider when expressing your argument include topic, tone, appeals to pathos, counterarguments and the voices behind those

> counterarguments. Recommended tools for composition include Adobe Audition and the web-based software Soundation and Flat.
>
> *Musical Listening:*
>
> *How do altering sounds and progressions in your piece reflect the various elements of your argument? Consider your topic, claim, evidence, audience, and counterarguments. Does continuity and conflict between musical styles reflect the nuanced character of your argument and its rhetorical context? How does arrangement and design reflect rhythm and expectation associated with the research essay genre? How do rhythms set up within your document interact with expected rhythms and comfort or agitate the reader?*[4]

Students not only used music that appealed to them personally and reflected their individual cultural identities, but they created intricate combinations of sounds, usually with different instruments representing different voices and perspectives on a single issue, such as a bass line to represent the counterargument. Students' explanations of their musical arguments were impressively complex, and it was evident that the challenge of designing an audio argument helped them immensely to identify, separate, and consider the interactions of conflicting strains in a well-rounded debate. I hope to find the opportunity to practice this activity again in the future. Depending on the learning needs of each particular class, there is not always time in a busy semester to devote to this aural exploration of students' major arguments. Nevertheless, when the time is available, this is an invaluable activity.

Activity D: Multimodal Composition with Speech and Instrumental Music

Students are encouraged to practice Musical Listening when composing multimodally. For example, when students compose video arguments whether for capstone video arguments for Composition and Rhetoric or tutorial videos for Technical Writing, they familiarize themselves with the genre by watching similar media from their classmates and from the internet, and observing stylistic trends within those genres. Students consider their own listening predispositions and the reasons for the development of their listening schemas, listening to their own work and the work of others according to the tenets of musical expectation theory, and adjust their scripts and delivery accordingly. The following is the assignment prompt for a version of this activity from my Technical Writing syllabus:

> Choose a task that requires a significant degree of technical knowledge and an appropriate audience. This can be a task that you addressed in your oral and/or written instructions assignment. Record audio (your voice) and video (your screen, environment, and/or subject) in a 3-5-minute instructional video. Layer your voice over an instrumental audio file to set an appropriate tone for your instructional video. You may produce this audio yourself or harvest it from a source, which you will cite. Videos should be three to five minutes in length. Recommended tools for this project include Adobe Premiere Pro and Adobe Audition.

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[4] See Peter Elbow's (2006) "The Music of Form: Rethinking Organization in Writing."

> *Musical Listening:*
>
> *How is the rhetoric of each of your audio contributions (narration and instrumental music) likely to affect your audience? Consider the pacing, tone, volume, and pitch of your narration. How is it affected by the volume and tempo, etc. of the instrumental track? Is the instrumental track distracting? Is the musical style of the instrumental track appropriate to the content? You may want to research similar videos.*

Students bring all of their experience experimenting with the affordances of sonic rhetoric alone to multimodal composition, considering both the form and structure of the narration and instrumental track, and the overall form and structure of the multimodal composition. Students do the same for group presentations to their classmates. They must prepare and deliver scripts with their multimodal presentations, then answer questions afterward. Thus, students' presentation speaking skills can be challenged, assessed, shaped and encouraged from two different perspectives.

Conclusion

Musical Listening offers significant theoretical and pedagogical contributions to multimodal rhetorics, sonic rhetorics, and rhetorical listening. As a heuristic, Musical Listening adds to students' existing tool set for approaching and analyzing rhetoric, specifically sonic rhetoric. It offers students a hermeneutical device through which to listen to find meaning in prose, speech, and instrumental music based on the theory of musical expectation. Musical Listening activities go beyond asking students to listen and consider the rhetoric of music. Students analyze and compose with sonic rhetoric both in aural and multimodal compositions. They learn to see themselves as multimodal beings and rhetors. Students and educators as well are challenged to analyze and evaluate their own listening histories in the context of the dramatically conflicting narratives that constitute our divisive political climate[5] and of surrounding rhythms from surrounding cultures.[6] Thus, Musical Listening finds a place in rhetorical listening: it gives students and teachers an opportunity to enact and address cross-cultural conduct.

The story of Musical Listening does not end here. I hope to publish further on this pedagogy, its implications, and its outcomes. In this article I have focused on the traditional notion of music as well as musicality in language. I have also discussed in detail methods and considerations pertaining to multimodality in the classroom with a focus on the integration of music into multimodal compositions. However, Musical Listening invites us to locate in our ambient

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[5] See Kenneth Burke's (2018) *The War of Words*, a volume that is, while posthumously published, eerily relevant to our current dangerously bipartisan political situation, so full of unnecessary divisive rhetoric. Discussions of Musical Listening in the classroom address issues of what Burke calls *selectivity*.

[6] Discussions of Burkean attitude and the need to avoid echo chambers share Ira Shor's (1987) sentiment that the classroom is "a place where knowledge, perception, ideology, and socialization are challenged." For more on see Ira Shor and Paulo Friere (1997).

environments[7] sights, sounds, and kinetic rhetorics, among a garden of other energies that move us and that we use both consciously and unconsciously to invite, enact, and build relationships out of empathy.[8] As I tell my students every semester, *We talk about rhetoric all day in this class. But, this class isn't about rhetoric. This class is about Love.*[9]

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[7] For more on ambient rhetoric and listening for natural and manufactured rhetorics that envelop us and address all of our senses, see Thomas Rickert's *Ambient Rhetoric* (2013).

[8] See Maxi Kupetz (2014) and Brandmeier & McKenna (2020).

[9] We also see this sentiment appear in the work of Friere (1997). See *Pedagogy of the Heart*.

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